DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 220 863 CS 207 197

AUTHOR	Haugen, Nancy S., Ed.; And Others
TITLE	When Our School Talks, the Community Listens--A Guide to Public Communications for Writing Programs.
INSTITUTION	Wisconsin Univ., Madison. Dept. of Curriculum and Instruction.
SPONS AGENCY	National Endowment for the Humanities (NFAH), Washington, D.C.; Wisconsin Improvement Program, Madison.; Wisconsin Univ., Madison, Univ. Extension.
PUB DATE	81
NOTE	54p.; Also sponsored by the Wisconsin Native American Teacher Corps.
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Financial Support; Guides; *Mass Media; *Models; *Public Relations; *School Community Relationship; Secondary Education; Speech Communication; *Teacher Role; *Writing Instruction
IDENTIFIERS	Audience Awareness; *Wisconsin Writing Project; Writing Projects

ABSTRACT

To help clarify the public relations role of the classroom teacher, the first four chapters of this guide examine writing-related situations within the framework of three public relations areas: establishment of a positive public relations climate, maintenance of ongoing programs, and prevention of and intervention in problem situations. The fifth and longest chapter offers three public relations models--(1) the establishment, maintenance, and protection of a writing center; (2) the Wisconsin Writing Project practices and philosophy; and (3) the Fond du Lac Letter Writing Project--and explains how each model addresses the roles of the speakers, and desired behavior of the audiences, strategies to be used, and content/task of messages within each of the three public relations areas (establishment, maintenance, and intervention). The final chapter offers suggestions for the use of the newspaper, radio, television, newsletters, and brochures to develop strong cooperative relations between the community and the school. Appendixes include suggestions for financing, a list of public relations ideas, a questionnaire/survey for students about writing, and supplemental forms and worksheets. (HOD)

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WHEN OUR SCHOOL TALKS, THE COMMUNITY LISTENS--

A GUIDE TO PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS FOR WRITING PROGRAMS

Vaughn Bossell
Jeffery D. Conn
Diane Hein
Cindy Lewis
Fran McGuire
Brian Moushey
William Shaw

Edited By

Nancy S. Haugen
John M. Kean
Maribeth Mohan

WISCONSIN WRITING PROJECT 1981

University of Wisconsin-Madison

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Page

I. Dedication 1

II. Introduction 2

III. Excerpts From Experts 6

IV. Elements Of Communication 10
(Definition of Terms)

V. Three Public Relations Models 11

A. Writing Center 12

B. Wisconsin Writing Project 19

C. Fond du Lac Letter Writing Project 26

VI. Methods Of Working With The Media 29

VII. Appendices 32

A. Financing 33

B. List Of Public Relation Ideas 35

C. Survey Forms 37

D. Supplemental Forms And Work Sheets 40

E. Resources And People To Contact 45

VIII. Bibliography 46

WISCONSIN WRITING PROJECT 1981

PROJECT DIRECTOR: John Kean, Professor
Department of Curriculum and Instruction
University of Wisconsin-Madison

PROJECT COORDINATORS: Nancy S. Haugen, Maribeth Mohan
Department of Curriculum and Instruction
University of Wisconsin-Madison

PROJECT SUPPORT STAFF: Donna L. Fisker, Guy Keshena, Peggy Scott

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Nathan S. Blount, Professor
Chairperson, W. W. P.
UW-Madison

Bonnie Faust
Oregon School Dist.

Steven Fortney
Stoughton Public Schools

Phillip Helgesen, Dist. Adm.
Oregon Public Schools

Margaret Jensen
Madison Metro. School Dist.

Robert Kellner
Wisconsin Dept. Public Instr.

William T. Lenehan, Professor
UW-Madison

D. D. Mortimer, Dist. Adm
Columbus Public Schools

Walter S. Plaut, Professor
UW-Madison

Donald Hafeman, Sup't.
Madison Metro. School Dist.

Mary Lou Sharpee
Columbus Public Schools

Joyce E. Steward, Professor
UW-Madison

Carrol Theobald
James Madison Memorial H. S.

EX OFFICIO

Lewis Bosworth, Assoc. Dir.
Undergraduate Orientation
UW-Madison

Peter J. Burke, Exec. Sec.
Wisconsin Improvement Program
UW-Madison

Blair Matthews, Asst. to
Vice Chancellor
UW-Madison

Teachers study.
Teachers plan.
Teachers teach.
Teachers evaluate.
Teachers revise.
Teachers succeed.
Students succeed.

But no one heard a word,
Teachers don't advertise.

It's time to let the world beyond your classroom door know that good things are happening in today's schools.

This guidebook is dedicated to you and your students. Your efforts, as well as theirs, should not go unnoticed. No program is complete unless parents understand its purposes, and teachers provide opportunities for parent and public involvement.

This guide aims to educate the members of the total school community about the role of public relations in the following ways:

-establishing a working climate for writing curriculum change

-maintaining communication about ongoing writing programs

-and solving classroom writing problems which need further assessment and reorganization.

Clarifying the public relations role of the classroom teacher accomplishes three major goals.

-The professional educator is equipped to respond positively to the public issues of accountability and the tax dollar value of education programs.

-The public communication process, a concern for speaker, message, and audience provides a positive channel for change when change is necessary.

-Public relations helps teachers establish a positive climate for productive and useful communication with all the publics they must face.

Complete your writing program by planning for communication with parents, administrators, and your community. Gain their support through effective strategies that advertise your success.

SCHOOL COMMUNITY COMMUNICATION: A PROCESS FOR TAKING WWP BACK TO OUR DISTRICTS

The authors of this guide thought the most useful format for this booklet would be schematic. In order to help readers deal with the programs and problems arising in their own schools and districts, particular writing-related situations are discussed within the framework of three public relations areas. The three areas are 1) establishment of a positive public relations climate, 2) maintenance of ongoing programs, and 3) intervention of problem situations.

Since the speakers, audiences, strategies, and messages listed may be different for your situation, the reader is urged to modify and/or glean any part of the information provided.

1. ESTABLISHING A POSITIVE CLIMATE FOR THE PROCESS OF COMMUNICATING WITH A PUBLIC IS VITAL.

Clearly, teachers of writing must be aware of the audiences they wish to address. They must find out what their audiences need and want to know. After an assessment of the public's concerns, the public relations role of the writing teacher becomes clearer.

Throwing the vital message teachers need to relate into a veritable ocean of publics and hoping the corked bottle reaches the proper hands is simply a hit and miss process. It is far better to discover which public is in need of information and if the time commitment and strategy are available to successfully relate the message. This section on setting the climate for public communication defines a variety of techniques and situations teachers of writing can utilize in their schools and districts in order to know the publics they need to reach (Smoker, 1968, pp. 45-55).

2. EFFECTIVELY MAINTAINING ONGOING WRITING PROGRAMS SHOULD BE A GOAL OF THE PUBLIC RELATIONS EFFORTS OF EVERY WRITING TEACHER.

If for the last five to ten years you have prided yourself on the excellent learning experiences your students have had, you have seen growth in the writing abilities of your creative and expository writing students, and you have had many students and parents thank you for your teaching efforts, it is time that the benefits of your teaching be made public.

Why? is a natural response to this statement. Certainly, if students are benefitting and parents are happy, what need is there for publicity?

The answer to this question comes from the realities of demographic, political, and budgetary concerns. In the last few years, and if the trends continue, declining enrollments, consolidation of programs, and laying off of teachers will be with us until the next baby boom. If writing programs worth saving are not defended school boards, administrators and especially the over-burdened taxpayer will cut or severely limit them.

Language arts teachers will have increased student and paper loads and will have to face the alternative of teaching less writing. The consequences of such an alternative will lead to a decline in writing skills, and a poorer public image of the teacher and schools in general.

This segment shows how public relations can help writing teachers save and promote excellent writing programs in their schools, and relate to audiences that want quality education in their community.

3. PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION ARE THE REALITY THERAPIES SCHOOLS AND THEIR WEAK OR NON-EXISTENT WRITING PROGRAMS NEED.

Articles such as "Why Kids Can't Write," (Family Circle, January 13, 1981), the April-May, 1981, Time Magazine series on "The Crisis in Our Schools," and many recent "Teachers Can't Teach" features are the vogue in popular publications reaching millions of Americans. These articles should be of real concern to language arts teachers. They should also be seen as real opportunities to educate local publics about good school programs. Teachers must own up to the faults and weaknesses of their writing programs, work through the communications process to restore public trust, and, at the same time, reassess and rectify the writing programs in their classes, schools, and districts.

This section deals with effective means of recognizing the potential writing problems a school community wants to avoid. Prevention of predictable writing program concerns is a valid part of the public communications process. The benefits to students, teachers, and to all concerned publics are abundant.

Public relations intervention into a school district's existing weaknesses can result in a cooperative effort to solve these problems. Putting a writing program back on firm footing is a benefit all in a school community can appreciate and support.

"Communicating is the business of English teachers. Now is the time to practice what we preach and let people know about the good things going on in English classes. If we publicize our programs and achievements, to the parent communities we serve, when Time or Newsweek publish their next articles in the "Johnny Can't Write" series, then there will be an informed parent body ready to defend the work being done by English teachers."

James Bell and Angela Purcell

"The working relationship schools seek with the media is not made in the midst of crisis."

Don Bogin

"The Madison Avenue 'laboratory tests prove' approach works for advertisers. If it didn't, they'd stop using it."

Robert Squires

"Usually this typewriter works fine bxt sometimes one key gxms xp the works. Yox can xnderstand how all of them are needed to do a good job. Oxr pxblic relations program is like this typewriter. Each of yox is an important key regardless of yoxr role...whether it is in the classroom, in an office, or on a maintenance staff. Shoxld yox ever feel that what yox do doesn't coxnt becaxse you're only one person, remember this crxmmy key. Your person-to-person contacts with stxdents, parents, and others in the commxnity can do more to make ...or break... oxr school system's repxtation than dozens of speeches or news stories can do."

Chalk Talk, Green Bay Public Schools

"The more survey respondents know at first hand about the public schools, the more favorable are their views."

George Gallup Poll 1973

"Positively speaking (Public Relations) is a two-way planned, regular program of building better understanding between schools and the people they serve."

The Banach-Barkelew Brainstorming Book

"The principal is the gatekeeper of change. If you had to pick one figure in the school system who really matters in terms of whether you get change or not, it is the principal."

P. Berman

Thus Spake Dostoevski:

"If the people around you are spiteful and callous and will not hear you, fall down before them and beg their forgiveness, for in truth you are to blame for their not wanting to hear you."

Public Relations Gold Mine

"2 reasons for problems in schools:

1. we didn't do something
2. someone else did something over which we had no control."

An Organic Guide to School Public Relations

"(We need P.R.) because the public supports things they understand ...or think they understand. Without the understanding, communication degenerates. Schools and school people don't get the backing they need to provide necessary educational programs."

The Banach-Barkelew Brainstorming Book

"Although the responsibility for meeting the critic is delegated to particular individuals, the ultimate success of any program depends on the entire personnel of a school or school district."

Leslie W. Kindred

"I don't think it's being melodramatic to say that democracy's grand experiment in public education for all is today facing some of the most severe problems in its history...the public's attention is on education--a few years ago we didn't have that. It's a problem and a rare opportunity at the same time, because as the public's scrutiny of how tax dollars are spent grows more intense nationwide, our schools have the opportunity to make the best of that public attention."

John Wherry

"Bad news may be helpful to the school system, although it is initially painful and embarassing. Bad news generates questions, involvement, and if dealt with properly, may ultimately bring about support from community."

New Handbook for School Communication

"(P.R. is) a process of communication between the school and community for the purpose of increasing citizen understanding of educational needs and practices and encouraging intelligent citizen interest and cooperation in the work of improving the school."

Public Relations for America's Schools

"Certainly it is stretching to ask English teachers to add the role of public relations expert to their already overextended repertoire. Realisitically, however, it is a role too important for us to delegate as circumstances increasingly make community awareness and parent involve-

ment crucial to the survival and growth of good educational programs."

Joyce Killiam

"If at first you don't succeed--rewrite."

WWP 1981

IV. Elements of Communication

Speaker--any advocate of writing who communicates with an audience

Audience--any listener or intended receiver to which the message in support of writing is directed

Strategy--the vehicle for conveying the message

Message--information relating to writing skills, processes, and programs transmitted from speaker to audience through the communication process

Your approach to public relations should always include clear indentification of these four elements. Define them for yourself: your role as speaker, the needs of the audience and who they are, what the message is you want them to receive, and what strategy will reach them best. Communication efforts planned with these elements in mind, whether you write them out or just think about them, will help you achieve better results.

Remember also that roles and needs are not static. The audience often becomes an ally and your message changes as the audience's level of understanding increases.

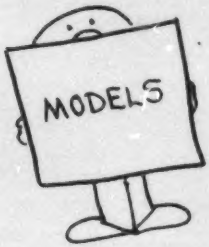
Constant reevaluation of these four elements will insure that your communications keep pace with what the audience needs to know and are applicable to new situations as they arise.

V. Three Public Relations Models

A. Writing Center

B. The Wisconsin Writing Project In Your School

C. Fond du Lac Letter Writing Project



V. A. THE WRITING CENTER PUBLIC RELATIONS MODEL: ESTABLISHMENT, MAINTENANCE, AND PROTECTION

Setting the climate for the successful selling of a writing center in a school district requires a concern for four elements: speakers, audiences, strategies, and finally message.

1. ESTABLISHING A CLIMATE

Speakers	Role:
a. Writing Center Instructor	Committed to the writing center concept and design and able to sell the idea to targeted audiences.
b. Department Coordinator	Aware of scheduling and financing needs and goals and purposes related to the writing center to promote the concept of the writing center to language arts teachers within the schools.
c. Principal	Supportive of the center and able to secure acceptance of the goals from other administrative staff.
c. Curriculum Coordinator	Knowledgeable about concept and process to plan, implement, and follow-up the development of a writing center.

Audiences:	Desired behavior
a. Language Arts Staff	See selves as key people in the process of developing goals or providing input about the implementation of the writing center program.
b. Content area teachers (Science, social studies, math, art, music, and vocational education teachers)	Recognize the benefits they as teachers can derive.

c. Administrators	Receptive to the innovation of the writing center so that implementation is smooth and effective.
d. Parents	Discuss the writing center and encourage involvement by their children. Become aides in the writing center.
e. Students	Recognize the value of the writing center in improving writing skills.
f. Superintendent	Promotes the writing center to the school board as a valuable K-12 program addition.
g. School Board	Recognizes that a writing center is not only educationally valid, but also helpful in addressing public concern for writing skill development.

Strategies	Task:
a. Assessing needs of audiences	Design a survey or inventory for assessing writing needs which support the establishment of a writing center. Direct this assessment at the various audiences whose input is required (students, parents, staff, administrators).
b. Planning	Form a committee of writing center instructors to plan the goals, purposes, activities, and evaluation of the writing center. The committee should consist of interested language arts and content area staff, parent and student representatives and an administrator.
c. Developing participation and program ownership	To avoid misuse of the writing center, it should be made clear that the center is for all students in language arts and content areas. The writing center is to be used by all skill level students from gifted and talented to special need students.

d.	Informing audiences and gathering additional input before implementation	Develop a fact sheet that summarizes the planning committee's results. Elicit responses from staff by face to face contact and faculty meetings; from students by school announcements, homeroom announcements, school paper articles, and student council discussions; and from administrators and school board members through formal contacts.
Messages		Task:
a.	Purposes	To gain necessary support, all relevant audiences must understand why a writing center should be developed in their school system.
b.	Goals	Statements must be developed which identify the benefits of a writing center in the school district writing program.
c.	Objectives	Specify educational gains students will derive from participation in the writing center.
d.	Model dissemination	Demonstrate to the various audiences successful writing center programs, their procedures and benefits.

2. MAINTAINING THE PROGRAM

How do the promoters of the Writing Center give it widespread school and community exposure? The purpose of this section is not establishment, but maintenance of an ongoing program.[1]

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[1]For information about developing and operating a writing center, the reader is referred to A Guide for Providing Individualized Writing Experiences - Writing Labs/Writing Centers. The University of Wisconsin-Madison: Wisconsin Writing Project, 1980, Irene Diamond, editor.

Speakers	Role:
a. Writing Center Instructors	Write publishable articles about how writing centers benefit students, share with language arts and content area classes the center's role in the writing and rewriting process.
b. Administrators	Talk with community groups sensitive to program accountability, school board members who need to be informed of successes in the schools for which they set policy, and help a busy superintendent recognize the benefits of the writing center program.
c. Students	Serve as teacher-trained-and-supervised peer tutors to demonstrate the value of the writing center directly to their fellow writers. Advertise by word of mouth to peers, and produce a student writing center guide.
d. Curriculum Coordinator	Address the writing center as an interdisciplinary tool for writing skills improvement. Develop ways for content area teachers to integrate use of the writing center in their courses.
e. Public Information Officer	Coordinate the efforts of disseminating information about the value of a writing center to all appropriate publics.
f. Parents	Promote use of the writing center by their own children. Encourage continuation of a program which clearly supports the writing process.
Audiences	**Desired behavior exhibited:**
a. School Staff	Aware of how the writing center will benefit their courses and students' writing. Encourage

	all teachers and students to utilize the center when writing problems develop.
b. Student Body	Appreciative that a writing support program exists and functions.
c. Parents Groups	Involved and supportive, having positive impact on administrators and school boards sensitive to public opinion.
d. Building and District Administrators, and School Board Members responsible for	setting, cutting, and defending budgets of comprehensive programs desired. Regularly made aware of the writing center's accomplishments.

Strategies	Target Audiences
a. Articles in student publications about writing center benefits	Student Body
b. Monthly writing center newlsetter	Students, parents, staff, administration, school board members
c. Bulletin boards, posters, signs	School personnel, including teachers and students
d. Announcement about hours and services offered	Students and staff
e. Attractive center conducive to writing work	Students
f. Thorough records of center's activities, student contacts, and results	Administration, staff, and school board members
g. Sound or scripted color slide presentations of the center in action	Orientation for new or transfer students, new staff members, and interested parent groups.
h. Above presentation offered to groups outside of school	Civic organizations, service organizations, lodges, potential adult volunteer aides.
i. Handbook of Writing Center services	Students and staff

j. Parent Visitation	Parents, students, and administrators

Messages

The messages are few but important, and must be accurately and consistently expressed to make the best impression.

a. The writing center is a necessary supportive service.

b. Without the writing center's services, student writing would be more tedious and less satisfying.

c. The center immediately and individually addresses student writing needs.

d. The center is for all students, in all disciplines, and at all levels of writing sophistication.

e. Maintaining a writing center improves the confidence students have in their writing ability.

f. Better writing comes from students who know there are people who can improve their efforts in the writing process.

3. INTERVENTION

Consistent communication with all audiences is the key to successful problem solving. Realize that problems will occur and plan to be an assertive, yet sensitive leader as you find solutions.

Speakers	Anticipated Role:
a. Writing Center Instructors	Acknowledge problems (parent/ student concerns, staff needs, budget restraints)
b. Principal Curriculum Coordinator	Communicate regularly with writing center instructors and are partners in working through problems with staff, parents, students. Support existence of writing center and have thorough knowledge of its operation.
c. Parents and Students	Have opportunities for input into program. Communication

		channels established through maintenance strategies provide the rapport that establishes atmosphere conducive to communication and positive problem solving.
d.	Staff Administrator	Benefit from consistent communication from the writing center and have regular opportunities to give feedback to center staff.

Note: As parents, students and staff members assume the role of speaker, it is critical that the Writing Center staff recognizes that it is now an audience.
The communication outlined above will work only if that staff is willing to be an honest audience, open to suggestions from these other groups.

Strategies and Messages

(Emphasize communication and respect of each other's viewpoints!)

a.	Staff Members, Administrators	Need to know what the center is doing! Use newsletters, personal contact, bulletin boards, surveys to maintain communication. Use these vehicles to obtain feedback to prevent problems. Be flexible as staff members communicate their needs.
b.	Parents	Benefit from frequent contact. Use parent newsletters, special Writing Center memos, phone calls, conferences. Invite parents to parent workshops on writing, utilize P.T.O. meetings or meetings of community groups.
c.	Students	Need instructors who are sensitive to problems created by schedules or work load. Involve students in ongoing evaluation of center's operation. Adapt program as needs of students dictate change.

V. B. A MODEL FOR INSTITUTING WISCONSIN WRITING PROJECT PRACTICES AND PHILOSOPHY IN YOUR DISTRICT

Implementation of the Wisconsin Writing Project in your district must be a step-by-step process, with accurate definition and re-definition of speaker, audience, strategy and message. This outline provides one plan and will give direction to you as the plan for your district is formulated.

1. ESTABLISHING CLIMATE

Speakers	Role
a. WWP Teacher Consultants	Prepare a detailed proposal to share with audience identified.
Audiences These become speakers later in the process.	**Desired behavior exhibited:**
a. Administrators	Understand, approve, and support the proposal. Guide WWP consultant through district policy and procedure for adopting new programs.
b. Curriculum coordinator Language Arts Committee or Language Department	Supportive of WWP and a base of communication for informing existing committee/ people within your district.
c. Teachers	Real allies to the project. If praised for participation and efforts, they will slowly but deliberately spread "the word" to students and teachers until WWP becomes endemic.
d. Parents	Form an advisory board or volunteer pool which is supportive and spread the project success story through neighborhood and community meetings.
e. School Board	Approves the WWP plan and can speak knowledgeably about it when requested to do so. To do this, they must be well informed themselves.

f. Students	Discuss writing skills needed in all disciplines: cognizant that all teachers value good writing.
Strategies	Notes:
a. Personal contact	Set up individual or group meetings with each audience. Prepare and distribute written material concerning the program. Recruit an ally in each building. Enlist help of the most vocal supporters, and staff members who travel from building to building. Form a writing committee. Talk to as many people as possible. Listen. The most critical person is probably voicing concerns held by many.
b. Surveys Sample surveys can be found in the Appendix.	Short questionnaires can be sent to parents or filled out at conference or open house. Survey teachers during meetings or in-services to guarantee a response. Survey students formally and informally.
c. Newsletters	Use existing letters and design a letter specific to writing. Format and information will differ for each audience.
d. Inservice	Plan one on the writing process early in the year. Give plenty of ideas for use in the classroom. Hold inservices for each level. Invite board and administrators. Plan an inservice for parents and for volunteers who will be involved.
e. Media	Use appropriate media available in your community to inform the public of your program.

Message

When establishing climate, the purpose is two-fold. Inform your audience of the basics of WWP. Then convince them to support the establishment of WWP techniques in your school or district.

a. Curriculum Coordinator Language Arts Committee Language Department	You want their support and want to plug into existing vehicles (committees, etc.). You will need to tell them about the WWP and the basics of writing instruction.
b. School Board and Administrators	You will need to tell them about costs, how teachers will teach, and the model you are adapting/ adaptions. Show them who will carry the responsibility for various steps. You might need their approval to proceed.
c. Teachers	They must be convinced to teach writing through the writing process. Teach them this process and provide concrete methods to take back to their classrooms. Show them how continued use of the techniques can lighten their load by shifting the burden for correctness to the students.
d. Parents	Show them the basics of the program as it will relate to their child. They may need to be convinced that mechanics can be learned best through the writing process.
e. Students	They must be told that they are responsible for using the three-step writing process. They also need to be convinced that all content areas expect high quality, well written and edited products.

2. MAINTAINING COMMUNICATIONS ABOUT THE WRITING PROJECT

Once the climate has been established for acceptance of the Writing Project, it is critical to keep the momentum going. The benefits to students, taxpayers and teachers may be lost if important information is not received. Advocates of the Project need dependable lines of communication as they build support, gauge local attitudes, and deliver relevant messages. This section will help you identify approaches to use and offer specific means to implement them.

Information often changes during the communication process. Your goal is to open the channels of communication so all know what message is being sent, how it is perceived, and what response it solicits. An audience, when properly enlisted, will contribute to the support of the Project. Prevent misinformation from filling "communication gaps." Go for the bandwagon effect. Everybody loves a winner and you won't have to do all the work!

Speaker	Role:
a. Teacher	Responsible for instruction, initial promotion of writing skills and information to students and parents.
b. Administrators	Support project with money and coordination of resources. Advocate with school board and taxpayers.
c. School Board	Represent educators to the public. Speak of project's worth and cost. Actively support project.
d. Business	Demonstrate writing requirements in jobs to students and other audiences; promote fundraising and support for project.
e. Grapevine	80% of news about school is second hand so make the first message accurate.
f. Students	These are the most prominent members of your P.R. team. Get them to: speak to parents about project relevancy, be proof that the project is used, convince other students through conversation and demonstration that the project works.
g. Support Staff	Secretaries and custodians are credible sources of information to students and public and can speak to students of writing skill needs in jobs.

Audience	Desired behavior expected:
a. Teachers	Accept writing efforts; receptive to contact by community service groups.
b. Administrators	Listen to success and problem stories from teachers and students; praise public support and encourage involvement.
c. Students	Listen to parental attitudes and become aware of parental writing.
d. Taxpayers	Communicate project benefits to community; act as an advisory group and advocate for the project; appeal for fund raising and budget allocations.
e. School Board	Visit the project sites and program offerings; aware of teacher and community reactions.
f. Businesses	See benefits of employing skilled writers; publicity acknowledges success of the project; make needed tax-deductible donations.
g. Alumni	Stress how the writing project aided them personally and/or professionally; support school efforts to promote writing.

Strategies

Growth and maintenance of the Writing Project requires regular communications with as many audiences as possible. Try to fit each message's length, vocabulary, form, purpose and vehicle of transmission to the intended audience. Test it out on a sample whenever possible.

Designate one person or group as a contact for audience feedback and regular media releases. Use one-way and two-way methods to test your effectiveness. Let the audiences know as much as possible.

	Notes:
a. Personal Contacts	Provide a good source for feedback. Attend extracurricular events, board meetings, community affairs, etc. and look for verbal and nonverbal feedback. Make phone calls and parent conferences a time for gathering ideas.
b. Assessments	Assess all audiences on regular basis; rotate advisory group members; listen to informal conversations; devise formal surveys and questionnaires to gather credib e data.
c. Maintaining Ownership	Inform all audiences of new developments, ways to participate, results of their efforts. Publish student writings in local paper. Display posters, writings, etc. in local business windows. Distribute "Home Writing Help Guides" for assistance outside of school project.
d. Other Information	Create an atmosphere of trust and feeling of satisfaction by identifying expectations. Be realistic to audiences concerning time commitments, goals, outcomes, etc.

Message

At the maintenance stage the message should address the concern(s) of the audience. It may inform, convince or provoke responses. The qualities of the message and audience determine exact understanding.

a. Students	Encourage all kinds of writing through contests and praise. Students are a major source of information to parents, and they are proof that the project is being used.
b. Staff members	All faculty should be advocates of the writing project and viewed as one group by many audiences. Advertise their

	support and initial efforts so they can't quit on it!
c. Administrators	They are either with you or against you. Communicate needs of students, teachers, parents, and businesses to them. Inform them of progress and problems and ask them to speak to Board in support of the writing project.
d. Parents	Their main interest concerns benefits to their own child and the community. Explain how the program helps develop job skills and personal growth. Invite them to visit during their child's time in the writing project area.
e. School Board	They are guardians of the public purse; therefore, tell them of assessed needs, costs, and benefits. Solicit approval for use of resources.
f. All Publics	Maintain communication with informational messages about the objectives, progress, and evaluation of the project.

V. C. FOND DU LAC LETTER WRITING PROJECT

A specific example of a public relations campaign, with writing as its focus, was carried out, Spring 1981, at Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, in conjunction with National Letter Writing Week. Using the schematic outline of this booklet, the following is a breakdown of what took place.

Speakers	Role
a. Curriculum Director b. Elementary Principal	The Letter Writing Week program was co-chaired by the Director of Curriculum, because of his involvement in the district's writing project, and an elementary principal, due to his interest in relating this project to the community.
Audiences	
a. Teachers b. Students c. Parents d. Administrators e. Local, state, federal politicians f. Community at large	The purpose of the Letter Writing was to inform and gain the support of the community for writing programs in the schools.
Strategies--in chronological order	
a. Informing the Superintendent	There was a meeting with the Superintendent verifying his support for the program. This took place in August, preceding the start of school.
b. Enlisting Principals' support	The meeting with principals was done individually the week before students returned in the fall. It was emphasized that the degree to which a school became involved was up to the principal and his/her staff.
c. Communicating with faculty	Some principals met with their complete staffs while others chose to meet with department coordinators and/or individual teachers to promote the Letter Writing Week program.

d. Involving students	Students at the various levels took part in letter writing to parents, public officials and celebrities. All About Letters was used as a guide.
e. Involving elementary parents	Correspondence sent home to parents asked them to send a personal letter addressed to their child/children at school.
f. Informing community	The community was informed of the Letter Writing Week through various vehicles: 1) The local newspaper printed articles and informational letters to the editor. 2) Local cable T.V. announced the project. 3) Billboards displayed information. 4) Local restaurants used special place mats. 5) Two local radio stations made announcements. 6) Bumper stickers were distributed. 7) The Postal Department created a cancellation stamp that would be used only by Fond du Lac Post Office during the Letter Writing Week. The logo was developed by two local artists and was used on news releases, letters, billboards and stationery that was distributed throughout the district and community. 8) Co-chairpersons were interviewed on the radio. 9) Banks and Savings and Loan displayed promotional materials.
Message	
a. It is important that all publics value writing.	Word about Fond du Lac's Letter Writing Week reached far beyond the boundaries of the community. Letters and telephone calls were received from Wisconsin's Governor Dreyfus in Madison; from James Squire, Senior Vice President

of Ginn and Company in Lexington, Maine; from Bruce McMenamin, an elementary school principal in Fond du Lac, Saskatchewan-Canada; from Congressman Thomas Petri, in Washington, D.C.; from John Stewig, President of the National Council of Teachers of English in Champaign, Illinois; from the First Lady, Nancy Reagan.

b. Letter Writing is a legitimate form of communication.[1]

1) It is a good way to organize your thoughts in an orderly fashion.
2) It provides a record of exactly what you said.
3) People tend to hear what they want to hear in a conversation. A letter is specific.
4) Copies can easily be made.
5) Letters encourage appropriate action.
6) A letter provides a dated record for future reference.
7) Written language has more lasting impact than spoken language.
8) What is said in haste or anger is often difficult to retract. Letters can be modified and words you might later regret can be removed.
9) Letters from loved ones recall happy shared memories.
10) A letter is still one of the most economical ways to communicate.

[1]From All About Letters, U. S. Postal Service.

VI. Methods of Working with the Media

Media can play an important role in developing strong cooperative relations between the community and the school. To insure that your writing programs will be successfully understood and portrayed by the media, accurate procedures, honesty and candor must be used. Below are five media forms that are most frequently employed, as well as some suggestions to help develop a successful experience. FIRST, CHECK YOUR SCHOOL'S POLICY FOR PROCEDURE WHEN CONTACTING MEDIA.

NEWSPAPER

Types of stories: news story, feature story, special column, photographic story, editorials, letter to the editor and filler (brief information)

Some Do's and Don't's:

Inform the newspaper about the event well in advance.

Don't keep photographers, reporters, or editors waiting.

Type and double-space all releases.

Type on only one side of the paper.

Send the original to the paper. Keep a copy.

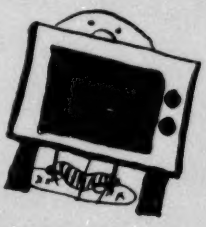
Release accurate news without errors.

Use the inverted pyramid style.

Use short, simple words.

Give exact dates in the story.

If the news being released is not interesting, do not send it to the newspaper just to have something to send.



RADIO

Possible uses: spot announcements, newscasts, sports programs, music programs, discussion programs, dramatic programs and documentaries, straight talk and interview shows.

Some Do's and Don't's:

Mail releases a week before an event.

Make releases one page long.

Type all copy double or triple space, using only one side.

Write simple spoken English.

Limit sentences to one thought.

Use the active voice.

Do not use pronouns. Repeat proper names.

Keep adjectives to a minimum.

Do not start sentences with a prepositional or a participial phrase.

Use first person only if you, the writer, really mean "you."

TELEVISION

Categories of television stations: commercial, educational, community antenna television (CATV)

Telecasts may serve schools in much the same way as radio broadcasts do.

Some Do's and Don't's:

A small number of participants facilitates camera work.

Avoid printed materials and charts unless they are large enough to be read easily.

Interesting content, with change of pace, helps to produce a good program.

Simplicity is essential to successful productions.

NEWSLETTER

School newsletters can promote successful programs to various audiences.

Some Do's and Don't's:

Check with the editor for the following:

The newsletter's style sheet.

A schedule of publishing deadlines for a particular issue and copies of back issues to review the type of material published.

Personal contact with an editor will help in the publishing of of your article.

Make sure your writing is focused and uses plain English.

Your article should be timely if newsletters are seasonal or monthly.

BROCHURES

When preparing a brochure to promote your program, make sure the form it takes fits the message and audience addressed.

Some Do's and Don't's:

Layout, design, typography, and even the color and texture of the paper used can add to or detract from your message. Choose wisely.

A brochure is built around excellent copy. Writing must be focused and purposeful. Language should be plain, yet strong enough to hold reader attention.

If photos, graphics, table, charts or drawings are used, they should be informative and consistent so as not to detract from the text.

If you are a good writer, but lack the layout and design skills, find a qualified co-worker to help--an art teacher, a graphics arts instructor, or a community resources person.

VII. Appendices

A. Financing

B. List Of Public Relations Ideas

C. Survey Forms

D. Supplemental Forms And Worksheets

E. Resources And People To Contact

Feel free to use or change any of the following forms to assess the needs your program will address.

VII. A. FINANCING

Changing economic and political conditions have affected the proliferation of federal and state funds. Though funds are still available, special efforts are often necessary to obtain them. This section will make some suggestions on how to generate them.

1. Planning strategies

a. Involve immediate supervisors.	Obtain their support for stamps of approval.
b. Determine program costs.	Is the program going to last more than one year? Are salaries involved? What will it cost the district?
c. Ask for advice.	Don't reinvent the wheel. Ask advice from experienced staff members (example: music coordinator, service club advisor, foreign language club advisor).
d. Include students.	Students are great promoters. Include them in part of the planning.
e. Consult Chamber of Commerce.	Some business people really feel threatened by kids competing with them. Find out if your community will support a fund drive.

2. Funding Sources

a. Title IV-C	Federal "Title" proposals are difficult to write. Enlist the help of your Superintendent or Director of Curriculum.
b. State Department of Public Instruction	The D.P.I. has funds available for basic skills projects. Contact Robert Kellner, State Supervisor of English and Communications Arts, for advice.
c. Local Service Organizations	Organizations such as Optimists, Rotary, Elks, Lions, J.C.'s, etc. raise money for service projects in the schools and community.

d. School Organizations

These include the Board of Education, Student Council, Alumni Associations.

e. Fund Raising Projects

1) Pizza sales
2) Candy sales
3) Candle sales
4) Bake sales
5) Car/pet washes
6) School talent shows
7) Athletic events

VII. B. LIST OF PUBLIC RELATION IDEAS

Public Relations Efforts That Can Put The Spotlight On Good Writing Instruction:

Sponsor writing contests.

Exhibit creative writing in an art fair or have a Writing Fair!

Set up writing displays throughout the school.

Print Happy Grams...note paper with telegram headings and room for positive comments to be sent home to parents.

Use peace-time telephoning...share good news!

Publish a calendar of classroom events.

Write a "State of the Class" message.

Plan staff inservice meetings about student writing.

Write parent-oriented newsletters.

Use parent volunteers.

Award parent recognition certificates.

Offer informal talk sessions for parents or staff.

Use surveys.

Establish a "Welcome Wagon" for new students and their families.

Organize school mini-tours during school hours.

Be visible in the community.

Set up a suggestion box or send parents newsletters with a parent feedback form.

Have an "In the News" bulletin board.

Involve senior citizens.

BE ENTHUSIASTIC!

Write invitations to public officials.

Sponsor a potluck dinner for classroom parents. Display writing!

Recognize school employees for service in promoting writing.

Have a mini-Folk Fair...involve writing, invite an author.

Establish a creative writing section in the school newspaper.

Develop a multi-media presentation.

Ask your school district to offer public relations training.

Be a listener.

Use a grapevine--nothing gets the word out faster.

Organize writing exchanges between schools.

Publish a neighborhood map.

Publish a new student handbook (written by students). Have it available in the school office, distribute to local realtors.

Involve professional writers in your program.

Promote program during American Education Week.

Involve members of the community frequently.

Think about communication for at least five minutes a day.

Remember, no program is complete unless you keep public relations in mind.

VII. C. SURVEY FORMS

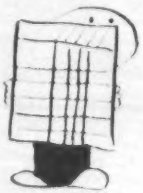
STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Directions:
Below are a series of statements about writing. There are no right or wrong answers to these statements. Please indicate the degree to which each statement applies to you by placing the appropriate number in the blank before each statement.

1) *Strongly agree*
2) Agree
3) Don't know
4) Disagree
5) Strongly disagree

While some of the statements may seem repetitious, take your time and try to be as honest as possible. Thank you for your help.

___ 1. I avoid writing.
___ 2. I have no fear of my writing being graded.
___ 3. I look forward to writing down my ideas.
___ 4. I am afraid of writing when I know it will be graded.
___ 5. Writing is a very frightening experience.
___ 6. Handing in a story I wrote makes me feel good.
___ 7. My mind seems to go blank when I start to work on a story.
___ 8. Sharing ideas through writing seems to be a waste of time.
___ 9. I would enjoy sending my writing to a magazine which might print it.
___10. I like to write my ideas down.
___11. I can usually say what I want to say when I write.
___12. I like to have my friends read what I have written.
___13. I'm nervous about writing.
___14. People seem to enjoy what I write.
___15. I enjoy writing.
___16. I never seem to be able to tell exactly what I mean in writing.
___17. Writing is a lot of fun.
___18. I expect to do poorly on writing assignments.
___19. I like seeing my thoughts on paper.
___20. I like to tall about my writing with other people.
___21. I have a hard time putting my ideas together when writing.
___22. When I hand in a writing assignment I know I'm going to do poorly.
___23. It's easy for me to write good stories.
___24. I don't think I write as well as most people.
___25. I don't like my written stories to be graded.
___26. I'm no good at writing.



2. Develop A Survey For Parents:

Beware of educational jargon. Keep your language simple.

Organize distribution effort. Use open house to advertise or distribute survey. Consider mailing or a special "return box."

Use school newsletter to communicate purpose of survey and procedure for its completion and return.

Include phone number of school and your name as reference for parents who have questions or comments they would like to make personally.

Below are some sample questions you might use:

1) Have you seen samples of the writing your child does at school?

2) Describe the writing your child does at school.

3) What makes a good school writing program for your child?

4) What do you like about your child's writing program?

5) If you had the opportunity, what would you add or change in your child's program?

6) Does your child write at home? How often?

7) What kinds of writing does your child do at home?

8) If information about writing was available, what would you like to know more about?

9) In what way can we help you help your child at home with writing?

From those opportunities below, check those in which you might participate:

___ meetings with my child's teacher
___ information sheets sent home
___ evening parent workshop
___ special P.T.O. meeting

As you develop the parent survey, be sensitive to the needs of staff members who might be threatened by the questions posed to parents.

With your administrator's support, create a positive atmosphere that emphasizes positive outcomes possible when we determine parental needs and concerns.

3. Develop a survey for fellow staff members:

Keep it short.

Establish and communicate the purpose of the survey.

Use information gathered from the survey. Share results with your staff. Actions taken because of those results should be visible.

Write the survey with your school's needs in mind.

Below are sample questions you might use.

1) What percent of classtime is used for writing?

2) What types of writing do your students do?

3) What are the goals of your writing program?

4) How do you evaluate written work?

5) Content or Unified Arts teachers: What writing skills do students need in your classroom?

6) What is the most difficult writing task for your students?

7) What concerns do you have about helping students write?

8) If information about writing instruction were available, what would you want included?

9) What time commitment could you make toward improving our school's writing program?

___inservice time ___staff meetings ___after school inservice (with advancement credit given)

___none at this time

VII. D. SUPPLEMENTAL FORMS AND WORKSHEETS

1. Audience

Use this list to identify audiences you want to reach when developing a Writing Program. Space is provided to include local contact person(s) for each audience.

Audience	Contacts Address Phone When
Taxpayers	
Parents with or without kids in school	
Business people	
Alumni	
Present Students	
Real Estate	
Teachers	
Political figures	
Grapevine	
Unions	
Faculty	
Support Staff	
* Many more need to be reached	Don't forget senior citizens, prospective students, community groups, bus drivers, "drop outs," school board, other schools, coaches, advisory groups and substitute teachers!

2. The following form may be useful when developing a project or proposal. Change any part of this form to fit your particular situation.

Communication Planning Guide

Goal of Objective	Activity	Expanded Description Activity	Timeframe From-To	Execution Date	Target Audience	Percent Responsible	Approx. Cost	Funding Source

Evaluation Method	Date(s)	Remarks:

3. Present School-Community Assessment Tool

This exercise will help determine if you need to expand your current public relations practices.

Insert at least ten audiences to reach when developing a Writing Program. (Appendices Audiences And Means of Delivering The Message may help). List five ways you communicate. Cross check and mark the boxes which you know are two-way communications with a specific audience. Communication is not occurring if you do not know how the message is interpreted. No feedback=no check mark.

MEANS OF COMMUNICATION

AUDIENCES	open house	phone calls	class activities	
Students	if there	✓	✓	
Parents	not all	contact made?		

4. On-going School Community Planning Form

Use this form to organize your approach to public relations for the Writing Program.

1) Get a calendar big enough to record appointments and responses.

2) Make a copy for each audience you address.

3) Follow this procedure:
   a) Identify audiences(s).
   b) Decide on appropriate form of communication.
   c) Provide lots of opportunities for feedback.
   d) Make regular communications.
   e) Keep records of messages sent and information needed.

Main Audience: _____ Other(s) _____

Date: _____ Contact address _____ phone _____

Message: _____ Response: _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

Need: _____

- -

Date: _____ Contact address _____ phone _____

Message: _____ Response: _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

Need: _____

- -

5. Means Of Delivering The Message

Two-Way	Your target audience	Address Contact person
open house		
parent-teacher conferences		
phone calls		
returned notes		
award ceremonies		
community functions&parties		
coffee clutches		
board meetings		
extra curricular activities		
home visitation		
summer activities		
letters		
classroom duties		
student councils		
lunch/hall duty		
conferences		
talk shows		
staff-community-student contests		
faculty inservices		
staff evaluation conferences		
suggestion boxes with displays		
structured (planned) contact with grape-vine people		
visits to nursing homes		
tours of businesses		
writing fairs		
car washes or other fundraisers		
advisory groups		
(more of your own)		

Addresses That May Be Useful

The National School Public Relations Association
1201 Sixteenth Street
Washington, D. C. 20036
Telephone (202)833-4157
President: John [illegible] Gillean
Executive Director: Roy K. Wilson

The Wisconsin School Public Relations Association
8025 Portland Avenue
Wauwatosa, Wisconsin 53213
c/o Elain Cary

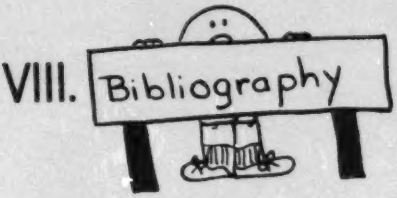
National Council of Teachers of English
1111 Kenyon Road
Urbana, Illinois 61801
President: Robert Squires

Wisconsin Council of Teachers of English
2220 Northwestern Avenue
Racine, Wisconsin 53404
Att: Neil J. Vail

Department of Public Instruction
125 South Webster
Madison, Wisconsin 53707
Call Bob Kellner, (608)267-9270
For a Publications list send to:
P.O. Box 7841
D. P. I.
125 South Webster
Madison, Wisconsin 53707

For information on projects that are now operating successfully in our area call or write to:

Wisconsin Writing Project
128C Teacher Education Building
225 North Mills Street
University of Wisconsin-Madison
Madison, Wisconsin 53701
(608)263-4614



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Wisconsin Writing Project Participants

Summer 1981

Marlene Anklam
Edgerton Elementary Schools

Sue Batt
Waterloo Schools

Nancy Bicha-Dale
University Lake School
Hartland

Jan Bonsett-Veal
Deerfield Middle/High School

Nancy Booth
Deerfield Elementary School

Vaughn Paul Bossell
Menominee School District
Keshena

Coleen Burns
Wilton Elementary School

Linda Christensen
Verona High School

Jeffrey D. Conn
Homestead High School
Mequon

Larry Ehrhorn
Wisconsin Heights High School
Mazomanie

Lori Hamann
Jefferson Middle School
Madison

Diane Hein
Orchard Ridge Elementary
Madison

Peggy Jewell
Kettle Moraine High School
Wales

Elizabeth M. Jones
Dousman Elementary School

Paula Laundrie
Waterloo Elementary

Cindy Lewis
Windsor Elementary School

Beverly Martin
Keshena Elementary School

Jackie Martindale
Lodi High School

Fran Mc Guire
Middleton High School

Susan McKamey
Neopit Elementary School

Brian Moushey
Deerfield Middle School

Penny Parsons
Wisconsin Heights High School
Mazomanie

Susan Perry
Lincoln Elementary School
Madison

Michael Scheer
Sabish Jr. High School
Fond du Lac

Kathleen Schneider
Kettle Moraine High School
Wales

Joan Shaw
Woodworth Jr. High School
Fond du Lac

William Shaw
Woodworth Jr. High School
Fond du Lac

Estela Valdez
Park Elementary School
Cross Plains

Carole Vincent
E. G. Kromrey School
Middleton

The Wisconsin Writing Project is an effort by school teachers, college faculty, and curriculum specialists to improve the teaching of writing at all levels of education. The Project is funded by the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the University of Wisconsin Extension, the Wisconsin Improvement Program, the Wisconsin Native American Teacher Corps, and the National Endowment for the Humanities (through the University of California, Berkeley). The views expressed in this guide do not necessarily represent the views of the above named organizations.

Individuals desiring information concerning the Wisconsin Writing Project should write to:

Wisconsin Writing Project
Teacher Education Building
University of Wisconsin
225 North Mills Street
Madison, Wisconsin 53706
(608)263-4614

1200-3A2T003-81